

The Hurricane of October 18-19, 1944

PATH: The formation of this storm in the western Caribbean was first noted October 13, and advisory warnings were issued from that date. Storm warnings were ordered for the Keys on morning of 16th, and hurricane warnings from Miami to Tampa on morning of 18th, were later extended to Cedar Keys and Fernandina. All warnings were well distributed by radio, press, telephone and telegraph. The storm moved very slowly for several days, then started a decided movement to the north, passed very near Havana early morning of 18th, directly over Dry Tortugas and west of Key West during the day, and reached the Florida Gulf coast near Sarasota in the early morning hours of the 19th. Continuing a movement between north and north northeast, the center crossed the State between Tampa and Plant City, passed a little east of Jacksonville and almost directly over Fernandina, and thence up the Atlantic coast.

WINDS: The storm was preceded by several tornadoes on afternoon of the 18th, near Wauchula and Arcadia and in southeastern Polk County. Several citrus groves had trees uprooted by these local storms. The hurricane itself was very large, with the central core or area of light shifting winds from 40 to 60 miles in diameter, requiring from 2 to 4 hours to pass over towns directly in its path. Dangerous winds extended fully 200 miles to the right or east of the center, and about 100 miles to the left or west, thus affecting all Peninsular Florida. Winds of hurricane or near hurricane velocity surrounded the central core, with gusts up to 100 miles per hour at Tampa and Orlando. In the table following is given the extreme velocity for a single minute or a single mile. Wind data published for other storms have given the maximum velocity for 5 minute periods, and this should be taken into consideration in making comparisons. A few maximum velocities for this storm are: Key West 56 se., Tampa 56 e., Lakeland 49 e., Jacksonville 41 ne. These values are considerably below the extremes.

TIDES. Warnings for winds and tides were ample and well distributed, and exposed beaches were generally evacuated on both coasts. Tides were high from Sarasota southward on the Gulf, and from Melbourne northward on the Atlantic. Everglades reported 8.2 ft., Naples 12 ft., Jacksonville Beach 12 ft., Mayport 7.8 ft. and Fernandina 10.6 ft. above mean low water. Tides from Tampa northward were abnormally low. The rainfall was very heavy over much of the State breaking all October records in some places. Many stations reported 7 to 9 inches in 24 hours.

DAMAGE. Property damage in the State totaled probably 10 to 13 million dollars. The damage was heaviest on the beaches where tides were high, and Fernandina beach alone estimated loss of \$200,000. Throughout the State there was damage to telephone, telegraph and power lines, trees, roofs, chimneys, signs and radio towers. Excessive rainfall caused damage to roads and bridges. Of the interior cities, Orlando seems to have

suffered most, damage in that area being estimated at over a million dollars.

The greatest loss, however, was to truck and citrus. Mr. W. O. Johnson of the Fruit Frost Service estimates citrus losses over entire State as follows: 40% grapefruit, or 14 million boxes; 15% to 20% early and mid season oranges, 5% to 10% Valencias, or a total on oranges of 6 1-2 million boxes; 15% tangerines, 600,000 boxes. According to these figures, the total citrus loss was over 21 million boxes. Some sections suffered locally severe loss of trees, with damage for the peninsula estimated at 15% for old seedlings, 15% tangerines and less than 1% budded citrus. The greatest loss of citrus was suffered by Sarasota, De Soto, Hardee, Polk, Orange and Lake counties.

Truck losses were partly from wind, but mostly from heavy rain. In some areas the loss was almost total, but for Peninsular Florida it averaged about 60%. The money loss to citrus growers and truck farmers is hard to estimate since raise in ceiling prices and active replanting will bring some mitigation. The Florida State Marketing Bureau has made an estimate on total crop losses of nearly \$50,000,000. Losses of live stock were very small, around 12 head of cattle, 150 hogs, 5,700 poultry.

LOSS OF LIFE. As reported by the Red Cross totaled 18. This number includes 9 seamen who were drowned when a tug capsized off Bradenton, 5 others drowned in other parts of the State, 3 electrocuted by fallen power lines, and one blown from a building and dying from injuries. 24 suffered injuries sufficient to require hospitalization, and there were others who suffered minor injuries. Systematic evacuation of all dangerously exposed beaches doubtless saved many lives.

Stations in order of passage of lowest barometer. Lowest sea-level barometer and time, extreme wind (for highest mile or highest minute), direction and time. Total rainfall during passage of storm. Highest tides (feet above mean low water) and time. All times Eastern Standard.

Stations	Barometer & time	Wind & time	Rainfall	Tide
October 18				
Havana, Cuba	28.38 7.00 am	85 se. 5.45 am	?	?
Key West	29.11 2.50 pm	66 se. 2.11 pm	6.66	8 8 pm
Sombrero Light	29.25 4.00 pm	115 se. 6-7 pm	?	?
Dry Tortugas	28.02 5.00 pm	120+e. 1-2 pm	?	?
Everglades	29.35 9.00 pm	? wsw	2.88	8.2 2-4 am 19th
October 19				
Ft. Myers	29.02 12.45 am	65 ese. 12.30 am	5.04	4.5 7 am
Miami WBO	29.49 1.57 am	65 sse. 12.04 am	0.61	3.3
Sarasota	28.42 3 am	? ne. 2.30 am	3.83	4 noon
Bradenton	28.54 4.30 am	? ne. 3.00 am	3.33	?
Tampa Airport	28.55 5.00 am	68 ne. 4.20 am	5.49	low
Lakeland	28.08 5.30 am	57 e. 4.38 am	6.83
Melbourne	28.26 7.30 am	63 se. 7.58 am	?	?
Orlando Airport	29.13 8.00 am	82 sse. 9.05 am	7.49
Dunnellon	28.85 9.35 am	60 nw. 10.30 am	7.46
Cedar Keys	29.18 10.00 am	60 nw. 4 pm	4.60	low
Cross City, Airport	29.25 10.20 am	47 nne. 6.54 am	2.12
Daytona Beach	29.08 10.55 am	59 se. 8.40 am	4.05	very high am
Camp Blanding	28.77 noon	? ne. 5-7 am	8.46
St. Augustine	29.00 1.00 pm	60 se. 10.00 am	7.55	very high am
Jasper Airport	29.29 1.30 pm	39 n. 8.13 pm	3.64
Jacksonville	28.94 3.00 pm	46 ne. 7.45 am	9.70	5.32 River am 7.83 Mayport am
Jax Airport	28.96 3.20 pm	65 ne. 8.30 am	6.94
Fernandina	?	? ne. 9.00 am-noon	7.78	10.6 11.18 am
Savannah	29.13 11.55 pm	51 ne. 3.32 pm	7.85	9.4 11.00 pm

OCTOBER, 1944

Hurricane Track October 18-19, 1944. Heavy line shows path of center; light lines show limits of gales.



